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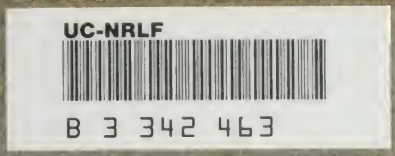

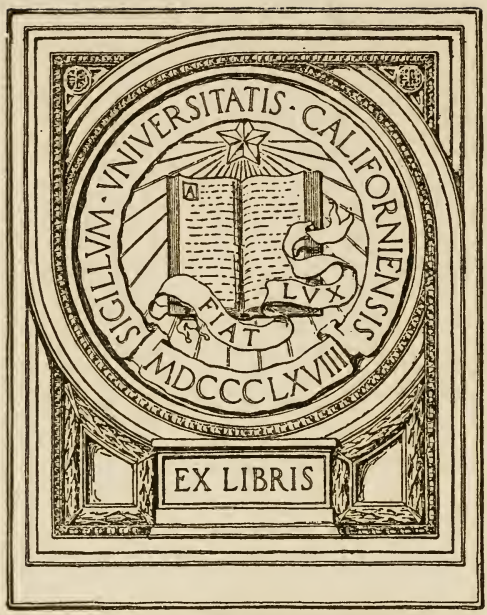
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Plays of the Washington Square Players

ANOTHER WAY OUT *a Play in One Act by Lawrence Langner*

FRANK SHAY, *Publisher* 1916

ANOTHER WAY OUT

Another Way Out

A Play in One Act

By

LAWRENCE LANGNER

FRANK SHAY: THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS
NEW YORK 1916

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Another Way Out

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Another Way Out

A Play in One Act

By LAWRENCE LANGNER

Original Cast appearing in the first production
by the Washington Square Players, at the Comedy Theatre,
New York, November 13th, 1916

MARGARET MARSHALL ..... GWLADYS WYNNE
MRS. ABBEY ..... JEAN ROBB
POMEROY PENDLETON ..... JOSE RUBEN
BARONESS DE MEAUVILLE ..... HELEN WESTLEY
CHARLES P. K. FENTON ..... ROBERT STRANGE

TIME—*The Present*

Produced under the direction of
Mr. Phillip Moeller

CHARACTERS:

POMEROY PENDLETON ..... A WRITER
MARGARET MARSHALL ..... A SCULPTRESS
CHARLES P. K. FENTON ..... A SALESMAN
BARONESS DE MEAUVILLE ..... A COSTUMIER
MRS. ABBEY ..... A HOUSEKEEPER

ANOTHER WAY OUT

SCENE: *The studio in Pendleton's apartment. A large room, with sky-light in centre wall, doors right, left, set for breakfast; a vase with red flowers decorates the table. Center back stage, in front of skylight, modelling stand upon which is placed a rough statuette, covered by a cloth. To one side of this is a large screen. The furnishings are many hued, the cushions a flare of color, and the pictures fantastically futuristic.*

AT RISE: *Mrs. Abbey, a benevolent looking, middle-aged woman, in neat clothes and apron, is arranging some dishes on the table. Margaret, a very modern young woman, is exercising vigorously. She is decidedly good-looking—her eyes are direct, her complexion fresh, and her movements free. Her brown hair is "bobbed," and she wears a picturesque Grecian robe.*

MRS. ABBEY: Breakfast is ready, ma'am. (*Margaret sits at table and helps herself. Exit Mrs. Abbey, left.*)

MARGARET. (*Calling*): Pommy dear. Breakfast on the table.

PENDLETON. (*From without.*): I'll be there in a moment. (*Margaret glances through paper; Pendleton enters, door right. He is tall and thin, and of aesthetic appearance.*

His long blond hair is brushed loosely over his forehead and he is dressed in a heliotrope-colored dressing gown. He lights a cigarette.)

MARGARET: I thought you were going to stop smoking before breakfast.

PENDLETON: My dear—I can't possibly stand the taste of tooth paste in my mouth all day. (*Pendleton sits at table —Enter Mrs. Abbey with tray. Pendleton helps himself, then drops his knife and fork with a clang, as he is about to eat. Mrs. Abbey and Margaret are startled.*)

MRS. ABBEY: Anything the matter sir?

PENDLETON: Dear, dear! My breakfast is quite spoiled again.

MRS. ABBEY. (*Concerned*): Spoiled, sir?

PENDLETON. (*Pointing to red flowers on breakfast table*): Look at those flowers, Mrs. Abbey—not only are they quite out of harmony with the color scheme in this room—but they're positively red—and you know I have a perfect horror of red.

MRS. ABBEY: But you like them that color sometimes, sir. What am I to do when you're so temperamental about it.

MARGARET: Temperamental—I should say bad-tempered.

MRS. ABBEY. (*Soothingly*): Oh no, ma'am. It isn't bad temper. *I* understand Mr. Pendleton. It's just another bad night he's had—that's what it is.

PENDLETON. (*Sarcastically polite*): Mrs. Abbey you appear to have an intimate knowledge of how I pass the nights. It's becoming quite embarrassing.

MRS. ABBEY: You mustn't mind an old woman like *me*, sir. (*Piano.*) (*The sound of a piano—hopelessly out of tune—in the apartment upstairs is heard—the player banging out Mendelsohn's Wedding March with unusual insistence.*)

PENDLETON: There—that confounded piano again!

MARGARET: And they always play the Wedding March. There must be an old maid living there.

MRS. ABBEY: They're doing that for a reason.

MARGARET: What reason?

MRS. ABBEY: Their cook told me yesterday that her missus thinks if she keeps on a-playing of the Wedding March, p'raps it'll give you an' Mr. Pendleton the idea of getting married. She don't believe in couples livin' together—like you an' Mr. Pendleton.

MARGARET: No?

MRS. ABBEY: And—I just said you an' Mr. Pendleton had been living together so long, it was my opinion you might just as well be married an' done with it.

MARGARET. (*Angrily*): Your opinion is quite uncalled for, Mrs. Abbey.

PENDLETON: Why shouldn't Mrs. Abbey give us her

opinion? It may be valuable. Look at her experiences in matrimony.

MRS. ABBEY: In matrimony, and out of it, too.

MARGARET. (*Sitting*): But Mrs. Abbey has no right to discuss our affairs with other people's maids.

MRS. ABBEY: I'll be glad to quit if I don't suit the mistress.

MARGARET. (*Angrily*): There! Mistress again! How often have I asked you not to refer to me as the mistress?

MRS. ABBEY: No offense, ma'am.

PENDLETON: You'd better see if there's any mail, Mrs. Abbey—and take those flowers away with you.

MRS. ABBEY: Very well, sir. (*Exit Mrs. Abbey door centre.*)

MARGARET: What an old fashioned point of view Mrs. Abbey has—just because she's deserted three husbands. (*Pendleton takes up paper and commences to read.*)

MARGARET: Pommy, why *do* you stoop so.

PENDLETON: Am I stooping?

MARGARET: I'm tired of telling you. You ought to take more exercise. (*Pendleton continues to read.*)

MARGARET: One reason why the Greeks were the greatest of artists was because they cultivated the body as carefully as the mind.

PENDLETON: Oh—Hang the Greeks. (*Enter Mrs. Abbey right, with letters.*)

MRS. ABBEY: These are your letters sir. (*Coldly.*) And these are yours ma'am. (*Exit Mrs. Abbey left.*)

MARGARET: (*Who has opened her letters meanwhile.*) How delightful! Tom Del Valli has asked us to a party at his studio next Friday.

PENDLETON: (*Opening his letters.*) Both of us?

MARGARET: (*Giving him letter.*) Yes—and Helen Marsden wants us for Saturday.

PENDLETON: Both of us?

MARGARET: (*Picking up another letter.*) Yes—and here's one from Bobby Watson for Sunday.

PENDLETON: Both of us?

MARGARET: Yes.

PENDLETON: Really, Margaret, this is becoming exasperating. (*Hold up letters.*) Here are four more—I suppose for both of us. People keep on inviting us out together time after time as though we were the most conventional married couple on God's earth.

MARGARET: Do you object to going out with me?

PENDLETON: (*Doubtfully.*) No—it isn't that. But we're having too much of a good thing. And I've come to the conclusion that it's your fault.

MARGARET: (*Indignantly.*) Oh—it's my fault? Of course you'd blame *me.* Why?

PENDLETON: Because you have such an absurd habit of boasting to people of your devotion for me—when we're out.

MARGARET: You surely don't expect me to quarrel with you in public?

PENDLETON: It isn't necessary to go to that extent. But when everybody believes that we're utterly—almost stupidly —in love with one another, what can you expect?

MARGARET: You said once you never wanted me to suppress anything.

PENDLETON: That was before we began living together.

MARGARET: What could I have done?

PENDLETON: (*Up right.*) Anything—just so we could have a little more freedom—instead of being tied together the way we are. Never a moment when we're not together —never a moment of freedom—never a moment when I'm not interviewed by special article writers from almost every paper and magazine in the country, as the only successful exponent of the theory that love can be so perfect that the marriage contract degrades it. I put it to you Margaret—if this is a free union it is simply intolerable!

MARGARET: But aren't we living together so as to have more freedom? Think of what it might be if we were

married. Didn't you once write that "When marriage came in at the door, freedom flew out at the window?"

PENDLETON: Are we any better off—with everybody treating us as though we were living together simply to prove a principle?

MARGARET: Well, aren't we? You said so yourself; otherwise, how can we be a beautiful example to other people, and show them how to lead the pure natural lives of the later Greeks?

PENDLETON: Damn the later Greeks. Why do you always throw those confounded later Greeks in my face! We've got to look at it from *our* standpoint. This situation must come to an end.

MARGARET: What can we do?

PENDLETON: It rests with you.

MARGARET: With me?

PENDLETON: (*Dramatically.*) You can compromise yourself with somebody—publicly. That'll put an end to everything.

MARGARET: How will that end it?

PENDLETON: It'll break down the morally sanctified atmosphere in which we're living. Then, perhaps, people will regard us as immoral—and treat us like decent human beings again.

MARGARET: But I don't want to compromise myself.

PENDLETON: If you believe in your own ideals, you must.

MARGARET: But why should *I* have to do it?

PENDLETON: It will be so easy for *you*.

MARGARET: Why can't we both be compromised? That would be better still.

PENDLETON: I should find it a bore. You, unless my memory fails me—would enjoy it.

MARGARET: You needn't be cynical. Even if you don't enjoy it, you can work it into a novel.

PENDLETON: It's less exertion to imagine an affair of that sort—and the result would probably be more saleable. Besides—I have no interest whatsoever in women—at least the women we know.

MARGARET: For that matter I don't know any eligible men.

PENDLETON: What about Bob Lockwood?

MARGARET: But he's your best friend!

PENDLETON: Exactly—no man ever really trusts his best friend. He'll probably compromise you without compunction.

MARGARET: Yes—I'm afraid he'd be too dangerous—he tells you all his secrets. Whom will you choose?

PENDLETON: It's a matter of complete indifference to me.

MARGARET: I've heard a lot of queer stories about Jean Roberts. How would she do?

PENDLETON: (*Firmly.*) Margaret, I don't mind being party to a flirtation—but I draw the line at being the victim of a seduction.

MARGARET: Why not leave it to chance? Let it be the next interesting woman you meet.

PENDLETON: That might be amusing. But there must be an age limit. And how about you?

MARGARET: (*Takes cloth off statuette and discloses figure of Apollo in rough modelling clay.*) Me—Why not the new model who is coming today to pose for my Apollo?

PENDLETON: Well, if he's anything like that you ought to be able to create a sensation. Then—perhaps—we shall have some real freedom.

MARGARET: Pommy, do you still love me as much as you did?

PENDLETON: (*Cuttingly.*) How you sentimentalize! Do you think I'd be willing to enter into a flirtation with a strange woman—if I didn't want to keep on living with you?

MARGARET: And we won't have to break up our little home—will we?

PENDLETON: No, anything to save the home. (*Catches himself.*) My God! If any of my readers should hear

me say that! To think that I—Pomeroy Pendleton, should be trying to save my own home. And yet, how characteristically paradoxical.

MARGARET: (*Interrupting.*) Give me a kiss. Now you are going to philosophize. (*She goes to him, sits on his lap, and places her arm on his shoulder; he takes out cigarette, she lights it for him.*)

PENDLETON: (*Brought back to reality.*) I have some work to do—I must go.

MARGARET: A kiss!

PENDLETON: (*Kisses her carelessly.*) There—let me go.

MARGARET: I want a real kiss.

PENDLETON: Don't be silly dear, I can't play this morning. (*Door bell.*) I've simply got to finish that last chapter. (*A bell rings, Mrs. Abbey enters and goes to door.*)

MRS. ABBEY: There's a lady to see Mr. Pendleton.

MARGARET: Tell her to come in!

PENDLETON: But Margaret!

MARGARET: Remember—(*significantly*)—the first woman you meet! (*Exit Margaret and Mrs. Abbey after she has shown in the Baroness de Meauville.*)

BARONESS DE MEAUVILLE: (*Speaking with a pronounced English accent.*) Good morning, Mr. Pendleton, I'm the Baroness de Meauville!

PENDLETON: (*Recalling her name.*) Baroness de Meauville—Ah, the costumiere?

BARONESS: Not a costumiere—Mr. Pendleton, I am an artist—an artist in modern attire. A woman is to me what a canvas is to a painter.

PENDLETON: Excuse me for receiving you in my dressing gown. I was at work.

BARONESS: I like to see men in dressing gowns—yours is very charming.

PENDLETON: (*Flattered and pleased.*) Do you like it? I designed it myself.

BARONESS: (*Looking seductively into his eyes.*) How few *really* creative artists there are in America.

PENDLETON: (*Modestly.*) You flatter me.

BARONESS: Not at all. You must know that I'm a great admirer of yours, Mr. Pendleton. I've read every one of your books. I feel I know you as an old friend.

PENDLETON: That's very nice of you! (*The Baroness reclines on couch; takes jewelled case from reticule and offers Pendleton a cigarette.*)

BARONESS: Will you smoke?

PENDLETON: Thanks. (*Pendleton lights her cigarette, then his own. He draws his chair up to the couch. An atmosphere of mutual interest is established.*)

BARONESS: Mr. Pendleton—I have a mission in life. It is to make the American woman the best dressed woman in the world. I came here today because I want you to help me.

PENDLETON: But I have no ambitions in that direction.

BARONESS: Why should you have ambitions? Only the bourgeoise has ambitions. We artists have inspirations. I want to breathe into you the spirit of my great undertaking. Already I have opened my place in the smartest part of the Avenue. Already I have drawn my assistants from all parts of the world. Nothing is lacking to complete my plans—but *you.*

PENDLETON: Me—why me?

BARONESS: (*Endearingly.*) Are you not considered one of the foremost men of letters in America?

PENDLETON: Yes.

BARONESS: Are you not an artist of taste and distinction?

PENDLETON: (*Modestly.*) Didn't you say you had read all my books?

BARONESS: Are you not the only writer who has successfully portrayed the emotional side of American life?

PENDLETON: (*Decidedly.*) Yes.

BARONESS: Exactly—that is why I have chosen you—to write my advertisements.

PENDLETON: (*Aghast.*) But, Baroness!

BARONESS: You're not going to say *that*—it's *so* ordinary.

PENDLETON: But—but—you want *me* to write *advertisements!*

BARONESS: Please don't disappoint me.

PENDLETON: But—*advertisements!*

BARONESS: Yours would be wonderful! You may even evolve a new form of literature.

PENDLETON: Yes, I suppose that's so. But one has a sense of pride.

BARONESS: Art comes before Pride. Consider *my* feelings—an aristocrat—coming here to America and engaging in commerce, and advertising, and other dreadful things—and all for the sake of Art!

PENDLETON: But you make money out of it.

BARONESS: Only incidentially. Just as you—in writing my advertisements, would make—say ten thousand or so—as a sort of accident. But don't let us talk of money. It's perfectly revolting—isn't it? Art is Life, and I believe in Life for Art's sake. That's why I'm a success.

PENDLETON: Indeed? How interesting; please go on.

BARONESS: When a woman comes to me for a gown—I don't measure her body—why should I? I measure her mind. I find her color harmony. In a moment I can tell whether she ought to wear scarlet, mauve, tope, magenta, or any other color, so as to fall into her proper rythm.

Everyone has a rhythm, you know. (*Pendleton sits on sofa.*) But I don't have to explain all this to you, Mr. Pendleton. You understand it intuitively. This heliotrope you are wearing shows me at once that you are in rhythm.

PENDLETON: (*Thinking of Margaret.*) I'm not so sure that I am. What you say interests me. May I ask you a question?

BARONESS: Yes, but I may not answer it.

PENDLETON: Why do you wear heliotrope—and the same shade as mine?

BARONESS: (*With mock mystery.*) You mustn't ask me that.

PENDLETON: I'm all curiosity.

BARONESS: Curiosity is dangerous.

PENDLETON: Supposing I try to find out.

BARONESS: That may be even more dangerous.

PENDLETON: I'm fond of that kind of danger.

BARONESS: Take care—I'm very fragile.

PENDLETON: Isn't heliotrope in rhythm with the faint reflection of passion?

BARONESS: How brutal of you to have said it.

PENDLETON: (*Coming closer to her.*) I, too, am in rhythm with heliotrope.

BARONESS: (*With joy.*) How glad I am. Thank God you've no desire to kiss my lips.

PENDLETON: Only your finger-tips. (*They exchange kisses and fingertips.*)

PENDLETON: Your fingers are like soft pale waxen tapers.

BARONESS: Your kisses are the breathings that light them into quivering flame.

PENDLETON: Exquisite—exquisite.

BARONESS: (*Withdrawing her hands.*) That was a moment.

PENDLETON: We must have many such.

BARONESS: Many? That's too near too much.

PENDLETON: (*Fervently.*) We shall—dear lady.

BARONESS: How I adore your writings. They have made me realize the beauty of an ideal union—the love of one man for one woman—at a time. Let us have such a union —you and me.

PENDLETON: (*Taken aback.*) But I live in such a union already.

BARONESS: (*Rising in amazement.*) And only a moment ago you kissed me!

PENDLETON: Well—what of it?

BARONESS: Don't you see what we've done? You are

living in one of those wonderful unions you describe in your books—and I've let you kiss me. I've committed a sacrilege.

PENDLETON: You're mistaken. It isn't a sacrilege. It's an opportunity.

BARONESS: (*Dramatically.*) How can *you* say that—you whose words have inspired my deepest intimacies. No—I must go. (*Makes for door center.*) I—must—go.

PENDLETON: You don't understand. I exaggerated everything so in my confounded books.

BARONESS: Please ask *her* to forgive me. Please tell her I thought you were married, otherwise, never, never, would I have permitted you to kiss me.

PENDLETON: What made you think I was married?

BARONESS: One often believes what one hopes.

PENDLETON: And if I were?

BARONESS: I have no middle-class ideas on the subject.

PENDLETON: You take it too seriously. Let me explain.

BARONESS: What is there to explain? Our experience has been complete—why spoil it by an anti-climax?

PENDLETON: Am I never to see you again?

BARONESS: Who knows? If your present union should end, and some day your soul needs—someone? (*Exit door center—her manner full of promise.*)

PENDLETON: (*With feeling.*) Goodbye—long, pale fingers. (*Enter Margaret, door right.*)

MARGARET: Did you get a good start with the scandal?

PENDLETON: Not exactly—I may as well admit it was a failure—through no fault of mine, of course. And now I simply *must* finish that last chapter. (*Exit.*) (*Margaret rings for Mrs. Abbey who enters.*)

MARGARET: You may clear Mrs. Abbey.

MRS. ABBEY: Very well, ma'am. (*She attends to clearing the table.*)

MARGARET: Mrs. Abbey—have you worked for many people living together—like Mr. Pendleton and myself?

MRS. ABBEY: Lor', Ma'am yes. I've worked in nearly every house on the south side of Washington Square.

MARGARET: Mr. Pendleton says I'm as domestic as any wife could be—were the others like me?

MRS. ABBEY: Most of them, ma'am—but some was regular hussies; not only a-livin' with their fellers—but livin' happily too. That's what I call *real* immoral. (*Bell rings. Mrs. Abbey opens door centre and passes out. Conversation with Fenton without is heard. Mrs. Abbey comes back.*)

MRS. ABBEY: A young man wants to see you, ma'am.

MARGARET: That's the new model. I'll get my working

apron. (*Exit Margaret door right. Mrs. Abbey calls through door centre.*)

MRS. ABBEY: You c'n come in. (*Enter door left, Charles P. K. Fenton, dictionary salesman. He is a strikingly handsome young man, offensively smartly dressed in a black and white check suit, gaudy tie, and white socks. His hair is brushed back from his forehead like a glossy sheath. He carries a small black bag. His manner is distinctly "male."*)

FENTON: Madam, I represent——

MRS. ABBEY: (*Points to screen.*) You can undress behind there.

FENTON: Undress? Say—what's this? A turkish bath?

MRS. ABBEY: Did you expect to have a private room all to yourself?

FENTON: (*Looking around.*) What am I to undress for?

MRS. ABBEY: The missus will be here in a minute.

FENTON: Good night! I'm goin'. (*Makes for door.*)

MRS. ABBEY: What's the matter? Ain't you the Missus' new model?

FENTON: A model! Ha! Ha! You've sure got the wrong number this time. I'm in the dictionary line, ma'am.

MRS. ABBEY: Well—of all the impudence—you a book agent—and a-walkin' in here.

FENTON: Well, you asked me in, didn't you? Can't I see the missus—jest for a minute?

MRS. ABBEY: (*Good-naturedly.*) Very well. Here she is. (*Confidentially.*) And I advise you to remove that Spearmint from your mouth, if you want to sell any dictionaries in this house.

FENTON: (*Placing hand to mouth.*) Where shall I put it?

MRS. ABBEY: You'd better swallow it! (*Fenton tries to do so; chokes, turns red, and places his hand to mouth.*)

MARGARET: (*To Fenton.*) I'm *so* glad to see you. (*Fenton is most embarrassed. Mrs. Abbey, in surprise, attempts to explain situation.*)

MRS. ABBEY: But ma'am——

MARGARET: You may go, Mrs. Abbey.

MRS. ABBEY: But—but—ma'am——

MARGARET: (*Severely.*) You may go, Mrs. Abbey. (*Exit Mrs. Abbey in a huff.*) I'm so glad they sent you up to see me. Won't you sit down? (*Fenton finds it a difficult matter to handle the situation. He adopts his usual formula for an "opening" but his speech is mechanical and without conviction. Margaret adds to his embarassment by stepping around him and examining him with professional interest.*)

FENTON: Madam—I represent the Globe Advertising Publishing Sales Co., the largest publishers of dictionaries in the world.

MARGARET: (*Continuing to appraise him.*) Then you're not the new model.

FENTON: No, ma'am.

MARGARET: What a pity. Never mind—go on.

FENTON: As I was saying ma'am. I represent the Advertising Globe Publishing—I mean the Globe Advertising Sales Publishing Co., the largest publishers of dictionaries in the world. For some time past we have felt there was a demand for a new Encyclopaedic dictionary, madam, one that would not only fill up a good deal of space in the bookshelf—making an attractive addition to the home, but also containing the most complete collection of words in the English language.

MARGARET: (*Who has taken a pencil and is measuring Fenton while he speaks; Fenton's discomfort is obvious. He attempts to rearrange his tie and coat, thinking she is examining them.*) Please go on talking—it's so interesting.

FENTON: Statistics show that the Women of Average Education in America, Madam, has command of but fifteen hundred words. This new dictionary Madam (*Produces book from bag*) will give you command of over eight hundred and fifty thousand.

MARGARET: (*Archly.*) So you are a dealer in words—how perfectly romantic.

FENTON: (*Warming.*) Most of these words, madam, are

not used more than a dozen times a year. They are our Heritage from the Past, madam, just as much as our Flag is our Heritage from the Past. And all these words—to say nothing of the fact that the dictionary fills five inches in a book-shelf—making an attractive addition to the library, being handsomely bound in half-cloth—all these are yours, ma'am for the price of one dollar. (*He places dictionary in her hand. She examines it.*)

FENTON: If you have a son, madam, the possession of this dictionary will give him an opportunity of acquiring that knowledge of our language which made Abraham Lincoln the Father of our Country. Madam, opportunity knocks at the door only once—and THIS is YOUR opportunity—at one dollar.

MARGARET: (*Meaningly.*) Yes—this IS my opportunity. I'll buy the dictionary—and now (*sweetly*) won't you tell me your name?

FENTON: (*Pocketing dollar.*) My name is Charles P. K. Fenton.

MARGARET: Mr. Fenton, would you mind doing me a favor.

FENTON: (*Looking dubiously towards the screen.*) Why I guess not, ma'am.

MARGARET: I want you to take off your coat.

FENTON: (*Puzzled.*) You're not trying to kid me, ma'am?

MARGARET: I just want to see your development. Do you mind?

FENTON: (*Removes coat.*) Why, no ma'am—if that's *all* you want.

MARGARET: Now—bring your arm up—tighten the muscles. (*Fenton does as she bids; Margaret thumps his arm approvingly.*) Splendid—you must take lots of exercise, Mr. Fenton.

FENTON: Not me, ma'am. I never had no time for exercise. I got that workin' in a freight yard.

MARGARET: I suppose you think me rather peculiar, Mr. Fenton.

FENTON: You've said it, Miss.

MARGARET: You see—I'm a sculptress. (*Points to statuette.*) This is *my* work.

FENTON: You made that? Gee! that's great. (*Examines statuette.*) Just like them statues at the Metropolitan.

MARGARET: That center figure is Apollo, Mr. Fenton.

FENTON: Oh—Applollo.

MARGARET: I was to engage a professional model for it, but I could never hope to get a professional as fine a type as you. Will you pose for it?

FENTON: (*Aghast.*) Me? That feller there without any clothes?

MARGARET: Yes.

FENTON: (*Dubiously.*) Well—I don't know. It's kind of chilly here.

MARGARET: If I draped you—it would spoil some of your lines. (*Seeing his hesitation.*) But I will if you like.

FENTON: (*Relieved.*) Ah—now you're talking.

MARGARET: So you'll really come?

FENTON: How about this evening?

MARGARET: Splendid—sit down. (*Fenton does so.*) Mr. Fenton you've quite aroused my curiosity. I know so few business men. Is your work interesting?

FENTON: Well—I can't say it was—until I started selling around this neighborhood.

MARGARET: Is it difficult?

FENTON: Not if you've got personality, Miss. That's the thing—personality. If a feller hasn't got personality—he can't sell goods, that's sure.

MARGARET: What do *you* mean by personality—Mr. Fenton?

FENTON: Well—it's what sells the goods. I don't know how else to explain it exactly. I'll look it up in the dictionary. (*Takes dictionary and turns pages.*) Here it is, ma'am. Per—per—why, it isn't in here. I guess they don't put in words that everybody knows. We all know what personality means. It's what sells the goods.

MARGARET: I adore a strong, virile masculine personality.

FENTON: I don't quite get you, madam.

MARGARET: The men I know have so much of the feminine in them.

FENTON: Oh, "Cissies."

MARGARET: (*Flirtingly.*) They lack the magnetic forcefulness which I like so much in you.

FENTON: I believe you are kidding me. Does that mean *you* like *me?*

MARGARET: That's rather an embarrassing question.

FENTON: You must—or you wouldn't let me speak to you this way.

MARGARET: (*Archly.*) Never mind whether I like you. Tell me whether—you like me?

FENTON: (*Feeling more at home.*) Gee! I didn't get on to you at first. Sure I like you.

MARGARET: Then we're going to be good friends.

FENTON: You jest bet we are. Say—got a date for tomorrow evening?

MARGARET: No.

FENTON: How about the Movies? There's a fine feature film at the Strand—Theda Bara in "The Lonesome

Vampire," five reels. They say it's got "Gloria's Romance" beat a mile.

MARGARET: I don't know that I'd care to go there.

FENTON: How about a run down to Coney?

MARGARET: Coney—I've always wanted to do wild Pagan things.

FENTON: Say—you'll tell me your name, won't you?

MARGARET: Margaret Marshall.

FENTON: Do you mind if I call you Margie?

MARGARET: If you do—I must call you—

FENTON: Charley. Gee—I like the name of Margie. Some class to that.

MARGARET: I'm glad you like it.

FENTON: (*Moving nearer.*) And some class to you!

MARGARET: (*Coyly.*) So you really like me?

FENTON: You bet—say, before I go—you've got to give me a kiss, Margie.

MARGARET: Well—I don't know. Aren't you rather "rushing" me?

FENTON: Say—you *are* a kidder. (*He draws her up from her chair, and kisses her warmly on the lips.*)

MARGARET: (*Ecstastically.*) You have the true Greek spirit.

MARGARET: If only Pommy would kiss me that way.

FENTON: Pommy? Who's Pommy?

MARGARET: Pommy is the man I live with.

FENTON: Your husband!

MARGARET: No—we just live together. We don't believe in marriage.

FENTON: (*Pushing her away in horror.*) I thought there was something queer about all this. Does he live here?

MARGARET: (*Pointing.*) Yes. He's in there now.

FENTON: (*Excitedly.*) Good night! I'm goin'. (Looks *for hat.*)

MARGARET: (*Speaking with real anguish.*) You're surely not *going*—just on *that* account.

FENTON: (*Taking hat and bag.*) Isn't that enough?

MARGARET: (*Emotionally.*) Please don't go. Listen—I can't suppress my feeling for you—I never do with anybody. I liked you the moment I saw you—I want you as a friend—a good friend. You can't go now—just when everything's about to begin.

FENTON: (*Severely.*) Fair's fair, Miss. If he's keeping you, you can't be taking up with me at the same time. That puts the finish on it.

MARGARET: But he doesn't keep me. I keep myself.

FENTON: Wait a minute—you support yourself—an' live

with him of your own free will. Then you've got no excuse for being immoral—'tisn't like you had to make your living out of it. (*At door.*) Good-bye.

MARGARET: But I can explain everything.

FENTON: It's no use, Miss. Even though I am a salesman, I've got a sense of honor. I sized you up as a married woman when I came in just now—or I never would have made love to you at all.

MARGARET: Oh—wait! Supposing I should want to buy some more dictionaries?

FENTON: (*Returning.*) You've got my card, Miss. The phone number's on it. Bryant 4253. (*Sees Margaret hang her head.*) Don't feel hurt, Miss. You'll get over these queer ideas some day—and when you do—well—you've got my number. Solong, kid. (*Exit Fenton, door, center.*)

MARGARET: (*Taking his card from table and placing it to her lips soulfully.*) My Apollo—Bryant 4253!
(*Enter Pendleton.*)

PENDLETON: Did you get a good start with your scandal. (*Margaret hangs her head.*) It's no use, I'm convinced that we're in a hopeless muddle.

MARGARET: I heartily agree with you.

PENDLETON: You've changed your mind very suddenly.

MARGARET: I have my reasons.

PENDLETON: The fact is—Margaret—that so long as we live together we're public figures, with everybody else as our jury.

MARGARET: But lots of people read your books and respect us.

PENDLETON: The people that respect us are worse than the people that don't.

MARGARET: If they wouldn't always be bothering about our morals.

PENDLETON: If we continue living together—we shall simply be giving up our freedom to prove that we are free.

MARGARET: (*Faltering.*) I suppose we ought to separate.

PENDLETON: I believe we should.

MARGARET: We'll have to give up the studio.

PENDLETON: (*Regretfully.*) Yes.

MARGARET: It's taken a long time making the place homelike.

PENDLETON: We've been very comfortable here.

MARGARET: I shall miss you at meals.

PENDLETON: I shall have to start eating at clubs and restaurants again—no more good home cooking.

MARGARET: We're kind of used to one another—aren't we?

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PENDLETON: It isn't an easy matter to break—after five years.

MARGARET: And there are mighty few studios with as good a light as this—I don't want to separate if you don't.

PENDLETON: But, Margaret. (*Piano starts playing wedding march.*) There—that confounded piano again—(*Seized with an idea.*) Margaret, *there's another way out.*

MARGARET: (*With same idea.*) You mean—we ought to marry.

PENDLETON: Yes—marry and marry at once—that'll end everything.

MARGARET: Let's do it right away and get it over with. I simply must finish my Apollo.

PENDLETON: I'm going to buy you a new gown to get married in—a wedding present from Baroness de Meauville's.

MARGARET: I don't know that I want a De Meauville gown.

PENDLETON: Please let me—I want to give you something to symbolize our new life together.

MARGARET: Very well—and in return, I'll buy you a dictionary, so that I won't have to keep on correcting your spelling. (*Exit Pendleton. Margaret goes to phone, consults Fenton's card and calls Bryant* 4253.)

MARGARET: Bryant 4253? Can I speak to Mr. Fenton?

(*Enter Mrs. Abbey.*) Mrs. Abbey. What do you think. We're going to get married.

MRS. ABBEY: Well—bless my soul. That's right. You can take it from me, ma'am, you'll find that *respectability pays.*

MARGARET: (*At phone.*) Bryant 4253? (*Sweetly.*) Hello, Charley!

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